

TWAM

Tools with a Mission

Our news

New Year - and an amazing New Start!

January 2021



Empowering people with the tools that create livelihoods and transform lives

Welcome to TWAM News



Our experience of celebrating the New Year has been a little bit different this year and hopefully one we will never have to repeat. But in this edition of TWAM News we celebrate the truth that people can

have a 'new start' at any time of the year. The incredible encouragement, that with help and support, there is always hope and something to look forward to. So as you read this edition of TWAM News, I hope you will be as encouraged as we are to enter a New Year which, we all pray, will turn out to be very different to the last year.

Mike Griffin, Chief Executive

Tools to donate?

To find your nearest collection centre or to contact a local collector check our website or contact Ipswich.

Time to donate?

We are in particular need of drivers at our Coventry Refurbishment Centre. If you are interested please contact the Ipswich office, we'd love to hear from you.

Financial support

TWAM operates seven refurbishment centres across the UK and sends out over 20 containers of tools a year. We keep our costs very low but we still need a lot of support. We value all gifts whether one off or regular. You can send donations to our Ipswich postal address or request a Standing Order and Gift Aid form.

Prayer support

TWAM depends on prayer. If you don't currently receive our quarterly prayer diary and would like to, please contact the Ipswich office.

"I'm convinced: You (God) can do anything and everything.

Nothing and no one can upset your plans."

Job 42:2 (The Message)

About us:

Tools with a Mission is a Christian charity enabling people to earn a living and support themselves and their families. In many countries people have few skills, little education and no means of earning a living. A switch from aid dependency to self-sufficiency is impossible without help. TWAM started over thirty years ago, and has since provided this help by collecting and refurbishing tools and equipment no longer required in the UK and sending them overseas. Through collectors and centres across the UK, our team of dedicated volunteers and supporters help transform thousands of lives every year.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Tools with a Mission

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TWAM is grateful to the Aall Foundation for their long-term generous support of our work.

What a year that was!



I think it is fair to say that 2020 is a year most of us will be pleased to put behind us. But despite a national lockdown in March that stopped our operations for 3 months, followed by restrictions and then more lockdowns we still managed to dispatch 12 containers filled with nearly 8000 tool kits and machines.

This was an extraordinary achievement and we must pay tribute to the resilience and determination of all our volunteers, our tool collectors on the frontline, to the van drivers and refurbishers in the Centres who did an incredible job. And we cannot forget the office and operations volunteers, along with the Country Coordinators who kept the Mission going and containers leaving.

The last days of 2020 saw our Zimbabwe container leave Ipswich and begin its long life-transforming journey to Africa. The best Christmas present we could ask for.

It has been such an encouragement to see the impact of our tools and the ingenious ways so many groups have found to support their communities during these days, including making face coverings and soap.

One of the great lessons of this year has been the confirmation that tools provide people with a resilience to survive almost anything.

So thank you for your faithful support without which we would not be here today and planning a year of growth and recovery. Please be encouraged as you read these stories because they are only made possible by your faithful support of TWAM. So "thank you" from all of us.

When 'YET' is the most precious word

Juliet lives in Lusaka, Zambia and behind her beautiful smile is a story transformed by the small word 'yet.' For while it is just three letters, it is a word of tremendous hope. Juliet attends the tailoring course at FLY Deaf Inclusive, a long term partner of TWAM. They provide skills training for the deaf and the vulnerable. Her story is one of tragedy and hope. She tells us why:

"My husband died in 2013 leaving me with six children. He was a bricklayer and earned enough money to feed us, but not enough for us to save. So, when he died, I was left with nothing. My youngest was just a baby and my oldest 18. It was a terrible time for me."

Juliet desperately needed a new start and so did her children as there was barely any money for food or school fees. She tells us:

"None of my family would help me, and my husband's relatives would not talk to me. I had nowhere to turn."

Juliet and her children faced a genuine fear of homelessness and starvation. In a country with no Social Services, this is the fear when tragedy strikes. It is hard for us to appreciate just how tenuous life can be and how quickly someone's fortune can change. But thankfully for Juliet, hope came through a friend. She continues her story:

"I have a friend and she joined a tailoring course at the Training Centre. She told me I could train in a skill and find friendship and support. I knew that this was what I needed and went to see the leaders. I explained to them what had happened to me and they accepted me on the course."

Juliet has been learning tailoring for several years now. She could have left, but she stays for the friendship and support. The other ladies have become her family and her smile says it all! Everything has changed for Juliet and now she tells us:

"My oldest child has been back to school and completed his primary education (he was 22 when he finally finished primary). Four of my children are at school, but the youngest is not, as I cannot afford the school fees yet."

The most precious and important word in this paragraph is 'yet' - "I cannot afford the school fees yet." We may not realise just what an incredible word 'yet' is. It is a word filled with hope and confidence that life will get better. For a vulnerable mother living in ultra-poverty this is an extraordinary thing to say and even more importantly believe. But Juliet's life is changing. She tells us how:



"I have set up my own business and started to get customers. I am using the machine at the Centre to make clothes for them. But the place I need to be is the market-place, so now I am going to rent a stall there and set up a business doing repairs and making garments."

Thanks to the kindness of FLY Deaf Inclusive and the gift of a TWAM Sewing Machine, Juliet's life has been transformed. But not only hers - all her children as well.

Thank you for helping us transform a life of tragedy into an amazing story of hope and transformation. What a great start to a New Year!



How to turn sadness to joy under a Baobab tree

Down a dusty lane in the small town of Masabuku in Zambia you will find Maureen's garden. It is similar to all the other gardens in her area; just dust and sand with a few struggling bushes and in one corner a Baobab tree.

There is nothing special about the tree, until you look under its shady branches and see a makeshift carpentry workshop. It's a big tree able to provide shade in summer and shelter in winter. But what makes it special is that the space under its leafy boughs is filled with young people eager to learn carpentry from Shabalu. But it was not just the students' lives that have turned from sadness to joy - it is also Shabalu's. He tells us why:

"In 2017 I lost my job as a fitter in a sugar company. There was no other work for me or anyone else who lost their jobs. I had been involved in my community for a long time and I had seen the need for the children. When they finish school they have nothing to do because there is no work. So I decided to use the skills I had learned at the factory to train local boys in the skills, to give them a living."



Maureen

Shabalu could simply have felt sorry for himself, and like so many drank his sorrows away. But instead he chose to see unemployment as an opportunity. He wasn't the only one to do this. Maureen was no different as she offered her garden through her own personal sadness. She tells us why:

"I offered my land because it is a community thing. Some of our children are vulnerable and it is important they get knowledge from this carpentry workshop. I have six children and my husband passed away, so it is a big challenge for me. But this was an opportunity to help my children as two of my sons have learnt carpentry here. My children are vulnerable too, so I understand why I must help."

Many of the vulnerable children across Africa supported by TWAM have lost one or more parents. Inevitably this means they lose their schooling because the remaining parent cannot afford fees. Often the eldest children are pressurised into supporting their families, with boys going into crime and girls into sex-work or under-age marriage. Neither the children nor their remaining parent wants this, but it is the stark reality of families thrust into ultra-poverty and desperate for food and shelter.

For many, the only way out is for ordinary people like Shabalu and Maureen to step up and turn their own personal tragedies into opportunities. Shabalu tells us what happened when the workshop opened under the Baobab tree:

"When I came to this project, I did not know carpentry, so I asked someone in the community to come and teach me. When we opened we had six boys and some of them have already started their own workshops. Now I have four boys learning and they will stay until they are confident."

The best news here is that some of the boys have already started their own workshops. A remarkable achievement in an area with over 80% long term unemployment, and a much needed escape from a beckoning life of crime. But let's meet some of the current students.

Meet Emson, who tells us:

"Shabalu told me about the course. I chose carpentry because it is a job I liked. I just enjoy it. Having a school certificate does not help at all in finding work."

Schools do not teach practical skills and where we live there are no office jobs."



Emson and Vincent

My plan when I finish is that I will become a carpenter. This will be no challenge, I will be able to borrow the tools until I get my own."

Emson makes a very important point that schools do not teach the practical skills young people need to survive. How many times have we heard that! Tragically this leaves young people with few options, as another student Vincent explains:

"Mr Shbalu found me with guys who are drinkers. He said, 'You can come and join us and learn carpentry.' My father died this year so I was in problems. My mother didn't have any money so my uncle said I should come and live with him here in Masabuku.

I want to make my life better. I don't want to become a thief.

It's difficult to learn something new if you are not interested but I am interested in carpentry. Mr Shbalu is a good teacher. I can tell others they must improve their lives. God has helped me and will help me more."

Alcohol abuse and crime is the way out of sorrow and hunger for so many young men. Vincent could see where his life was going without the support of Shbalu.

This is what TWAM does with your support and it is remarkable. How grateful we are to Shbalu and Maureen, as they turned their sadness to joy so together they could offer their students a wonderful 'new start'.



Giving the skills to survive these harsh times

How do groups respond to the news that they have successfully applied for TWAM tools? Below is a lovely example from Zimbabwe and the Fountain of Hope Foundation. Their leader, Gideon, shares his reaction when told by the sponsor in the UK that they are funding their shipping contribution:

"Thank you so much for the wonderful and exciting news. We read it this morning as a team during our devotion time, and had a great time praising God for such a gift. This is truly an answer to prayer as we have been praying and seeking wisdom on how we are to go about acquiring the tools for the Skills Training Centre for the youth. Thank you so much for all the great work that you are doing on our behalf."

Zimbabwe has struggled economically for years and the pandemic has been truly devastating. Similar to the UK, this is felt most harshly by the young. Fountain of Hope is trying to offer practical help during the pandemic by offering skills training to young people. Gideon tells us what they want to do and most importantly why:

"We are currently training youths from the community to do farming, soap making and basket making. We are also proposing to start a Carpentry Skills Training Centre. Young people will then have skills and be able to survive these hard and difficult economic times."

It was the news that their tools would be on the next container (which left before Christmas) that caused their outburst of joy. Gideon can't wait for it to arrive. He says:

"We have a trainer ready. We just need the tools for the young people to use during their apprenticeship. Carpentry is a trade which will make them survive the harsh economic environment of Zimbabwe. We are grateful to Tools With A Mission for offering us the Carpentry tool kits, welding kits, rotavator and also metal lathe for metal work."

It is sometimes hard for us to realise the impact of our tools, but Gideon leaves us in no doubt the difference they will make as they start their new year of hope. Thank you for faithfully standing with us during the pandemic so we in turn can stand by our friends in Africa.



Without this chance many young people will turn to crime



Mechanics are never short of work. Cars and trucks work very hard in Africa, with vast distances to travel over unmade and potholed roads. Some potholes are so big, if you drove into them, you wouldn't get out. So vehicles need regular servicing and endless repairs.

Gordon knew what he was doing when he started his workshop off a busy road in Uganda 15 years ago. Since then it has grown from a workshop under a tree to a large and impressive garage, and all thanks to the provision of TWAM tools. He has applied many times to TWAM and received our large Workshop Kit as well as individual Mechanics Trade Kits. Due to the combination of his skills and being supplied with the best tools for the job, his business has gained a reputation for quality and made impressive growth. This has allowed him to do what he really wanted to do - use his skills to transform the lives of many in his community. He tells us:

"Motor Mechanics is my profession and I wanted to share what I learned. I started to train the youth, both boys and girls, who are school dropouts and offer a service to the community. We encourage girls as they do very well, although initially people told me they would not.

Without this chance many young people will turn to crime."

The course lasts two years and at the end the students complete an exam and get a Government recognised Motor Mechanics Certificate. Because they are well taught and have a Certificate, many employers approach the Centre when they need mechanics.

There are currently fifty students and ten teachers, all of whom work on customers' cars as they train. Gordon tells us:

"This is good for everyone as it means cars can be repaired and serviced in the community, and young people are kept out of trouble."

One of the young people being kept out of trouble is Kintu. He was one of the first students who trained in 2011 when he was 18. He trained, but never left and tells us why:

"I came first and foremost because I had an interest in mechanics and wanted to be a mechanic. I learned to repair and maintain vehicles and to drive. I now work as a supervisor and help students. We need to give chances to more boys, that is why I stay and help."

The 'new start' so many young people need is not just the skills that lead to a livelihood, but the skills that lead away from a life of crime. It is about giving a life-changing choice. Gordon recognises that it is not enough to tell a desperate young person they should not join a street gang or go into sex-work, for they already know that. What they need is someone to give them an alternative that puts food on the table and keeps a roof over their head.

Gordon has been doing that for hundreds of students, but only because first of all TWAM offered him the tools to open up and develop his workshop.

Together, over the past 15 years, Gordon and TWAM have changed so many lives. Thank you for helping make that possible.



Who will help the children?

TWAM works with groups across Africa seeking to meet many different needs. This means our tools are often used in many different ways too, in order to transform lives and communities.

One great example is Juliet, a truly inspiring woman from Zimbabwe. She was deeply moved by the tragic need of under-age victims of abuse. A need that broke her heart and she explains:



“Children go to the police or hospital to report abuse, but then there is no place for them to go and they are left homeless.

When the children have left their home because of abuse, they have no one to offer them shelter or support them with school fees, uniforms, stationery and books. I wanted to change this.”

Juliet saw that children fleeing long term abuse were able to report it, but were then offered no help and found themselves on the streets. All too often they were preyed upon by gangs. Juliet wanted to change that by offering a refuge where they would find love, care and support. So she opened the Shekinah Glory Children’s Home.



You might well wonder how TWAM tools could possibly be of help. Juliet has the answer as she applied for sewing machines and knitting machines to make the children’s school uniforms and clothes. Children run away with just the clothes they are wearing, so they need everything to be provided. A local seamstress gives her time to make clothes and very kindly offers to train the children as well, so they have practical skills, alongside their education. Juliet also applied for a Carpentry Kit, which she intended to use to make furniture for the Children’s Home, but once again the carpenter has also started to train the children. Juliet continues:

“The tools we received last year are being used by our children. We also have some

children who cannot be enrolled into school, so they spend their time in the skills training room at the home. During this long lockdown with schools closed, all our children spend time enhancing their practical skills.”

The project has been going for just two years and Juliet has been so successful she has extended her help to HIV Positive adolescents and disabled children.

They too find themselves rejected and homeless and refused schooling because their needs are too great. So, now, Juliet has expanded her vision to open a proper Skills Training Centre, but never short on ambition has big plans for it. She tells us:



“Our community requires a Skills Training Centre, but for the children’s security I cannot allow them into the home, so I would now like to establish a Centre close to the Children’s Home so that the community and the children may benefit from it. The children will benefit from learning skills, networking and sharing learning experiences with the people from our community. It will help them to feel accepted and valued. The community members will not pay to access the Training Centre but all items made will be sold to support the Children’s Home, as well as help buy material to continue the training.”

The Training Centre will open when their tools arrive on the container that left TWAM just before Christmas. They already have teachers ready and eager to help.

Juliet explains the importance of the new Skills Training Centre:

“With the economic challenges in Zimbabwe, skills training has become the way to go as there is no formal employment as most companies have closed and the communities are now self employed. Learning a skill will lead to empowerment of most women and youths as the unemployment rate in Zimbabwe has reached alarming levels and communities have turned to entrepreneurship as a means of livelihood.”

You will see from the photos, the children have been active during the long lockdown making face masks and furniture to sell. In these challenging times, without the extraordinary love of Juliet, the plight of abused and disabled children would be unimaginable.

Juliet and her big new family are on a journey of healing and restoration, in no small part thanks to the sewing machines, knitting machines and tools provided by TWAM. She is a wonderful example of what can be done, when tools are placed into the hands of big hearted visionary people.

I don’t know what would have happened to us

Sharon sits quietly waiting to share her story. She wants to share it because she is so thankful for the incredible change she has seen in her life. She attends the Skills Training Centre at El Shaddai Church in Lusaka, Zambia. She begins by telling us:

“I was widowed very young and left with five children, my youngest just three and eldest fifteen. I am part of the church and when they heard about my circumstances they invited me to join their Tailoring Course.”

Sharon is passionate about her tailoring, but also needs the love and support she has found within the group. When people struggle with the pain of loss, they need more than just skills. They need love. When she completed her course she decided that it was not enough to start her own business. She explains:

“The tools have brought a very big change to my life, so I decided I wanted to give the skill imparted in me to others. I asked if I could stay and become a teacher in my own time.”

The Church accepted and working incredibly hard Sharon was able to complete her children’s education and now many are training at the Skills Centre. Her eldest daughter is learning weaving, one son* is learning computing and another is learning building skills.

An incredible story of an entire family benefiting from TWAM tools. Sharon concludes her story:

“Without your tools my life would be so different and I do not know what would have happened to me and my children. Now I am able to share the skill in me with others, so they will have something which means they can put food on the table and help their families.”

But perhaps the most remarkable thing Sharon shares with us is that one of her *sons is **also studying medicine**.

That would be an achievement in any country, but for a young man thrust into ultra-poverty by the loss of his father it is virtually a miracle. It is a wonderful testimony to the amazing determination of Sharon, but also the immeasurable impact of a TWAM Sewing Machine.



I want to give someone a new start

In this edition we have focused on new starts. It's hard to describe or even understand the excitement and joy that applicants experience when their tools arrive. But it is because they know it is the beginning of a desperately needed new chapter for their lives.

Will you help us give someone a new start?

Please accept my gift of:

- £15 £25 £50 £100
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Or you could donate online at twam.uk/donate; by phone to 01473 210220; using our bank details. Please include your surname and postcode as a reference.
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